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ROBERT BROWNING'S

POETICAL WORKS

v. 2.

PARACELSUS

STRAFFORD

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1889

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PARACELSUS.

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

LONDON : *March* 15, 1835.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, *a student.*
FESTUS *and* MICHAL, *his friends.*
APRILE, *an Italian poet.*

PARACELSUS.

1835.

PART I.

PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Würzburg; a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Paracelsus. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget

All fitful strange and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"
For some few sunny days; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny; I would look
Liker my nature's truth: and both are frail,
And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Michal. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Drop by drop! she is weeping like a child!

Not so! I am content—more than content;
Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay:
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries? Ah, at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this

Sequestered nest!—this kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Michal. In truth we have lived carelessly and well.

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair!—each, trust me, born
For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay: that plant
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah see, the sun sinks broad
Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!

Festus. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile!
You are ours to-night, at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love:
But that last look destroys my dream—that look
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!
How far was Würzburg with its church and spire
And garden-walls and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting?

Paracelsus. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words,—
Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,

One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up:
Whereas behold how much our sense of all
That 's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns
That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself; that I have just
As varied appetite for joy derived
From common things; a stake in life, in short,
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—
He may convince himself that, this in view,
I shall act well advised. And last, because,
Though heaven and earth and all things were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.

Festus. True: and the eve is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it
As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithemius busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half-frightened by the awful tomes around;
Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-morrow!
Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?

We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
Will rise between us:—all my freest mind?
'T is the last night, dear Aureole!
Paracelsus. Oh, say on!
Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
To be performed for you: say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft
My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears
Have—never wearied you, oh no!—as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us;
And still increasing to this night which ends
My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day
You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!
Festus. In truth? 'T is for my proper peace, indeed,
Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy despatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend; and yet desist

No whit from projects where repose nor love
Has part.

Paracelsus. Once more? Alas! As I foretold.

Festus. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish?
That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the self-same spirit
It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which marked me out apart from men:
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself;
And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
Now that I touch the brink of my design,

When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!

Festus. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Paracelsus. Hear it? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference!
'T is this way, Michal, that he uses: first,
Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end
And what God's will; no two faiths e'er agreed
As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may;
Accordingly, I venture to submit
My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize.
Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired: in fine
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize,
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were;
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Michal. Is it so, Festus?
He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Paracelsus. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it.
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Festus. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it?—for his sake, not yours? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.

Paracelsus. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Festus. Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!
You smile; but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain;
But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

Michal. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn . . .

Festus. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures

This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first:
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'t was mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore: and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
Now, this new ardour which supplants the old
I watched, too; 't was significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change;
From contest, the transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
That careless bearing, free from all pretence

Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it professed to praise—though not so well
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many,—the secret of the world,
Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
—That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
This purpose, with the sages of the past,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
And that this aim shall differ from a host

Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
Shall its reward be, not an alien end
Blending therewith; no hope nor fear nor joy
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
Devotion to sustain you or betray:
Thus you aspire.

Paracelsus. You shall not state it thus:
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be his organ. All
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
No better than the sages.

Festus. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 't is doubtless need
That he appoint no less the way of praise
Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as he wills shall gather

Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
Valued perchance! He seeks not that his altars
Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
Suppose this, then; that God selected you
To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense hope; nor let your gifts create
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Paracelsus [*after a pause*]. No, I have nought to fear!
Who will may know
The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,

And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses?—still less,
To disregard their promptings! What should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!
Ask the geier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
Their holding light his charge, when every hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts
These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,
Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—

Let others prize: too intimate a tie
Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
To help me—what are these, at best, beside
God helping, God directing everywhere,
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
And every object there be charged to strike,
Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
I can devote myself; I have a life
To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
Think, think! the wide East, where all Wisdom sprung;
The bright South, where she dwelt; the hopeful North,
All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'T is time
New hopes should animate the world, new light
Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; thus shall
The heaven reserved for us at last receive
Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
Not seldom glorified their life below.

Festus. My words have their old fate and make faint stand
Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,

Some one of Learning's many palaces,
After approved example?—seeking there
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
Who laid up treasure with the like intent
—So lift yourself into their airy place,
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted force,
As at old games the runner snatched the torch
From runner still: this way success might be.
But you have coupled with your enterprise,
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert? Writes the sea
The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
You press to read? Why turn aside from her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay,
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,

She called an endless curse on, so it came:
Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not
Paramount in your love; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
And those who showed them not.

Paracelsus. What shall I say?
Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seemed,
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what would I convey: but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
So became manifest. I knew not then
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,

Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
Coming and going all the while—till dawned
His true time's advent; and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—
Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and woods
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The everlasting concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'T was then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all.
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long

At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep:
Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
His realm: and he points, smiling, to his scarf
Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
Where these must be displayed!

Festus. Good: let us hear
No more about your nature, "which first shrank
"From all that marked you out apart from men!"

Paracelsus. I touch on that; these words but analyse
The first mad impulse: 't was as brief as fond,
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
Interpret my own thoughts:—"Behold the clue
"To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine
"To do, these have accomplished: we are peers.
"They know and therefore rule: I, too, will know!"
You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
Or staggered only at his own vast wits;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me; and this lasted till one night

When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—"Seest thou not,
"Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss?
"Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed
"Presumptuously on wisdom's countenance,
"No veil between; and can thy faltering hands,
"Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
"Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
"Whom radiance ne'er distracted? Live their life
"If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes
"Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
"Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
"In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
"But have some idol of thine own to dress
"With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
"But to become a star to men for ever;
"Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
"The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds:
"Look one step onward, and secure that step!"
And I smiled as one never smiles but once,
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse
With the human mind; I understood, no less,
My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,
But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.

And softer came the voice—"There is a way:
"'T is hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
"With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
"Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:
"Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
"Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed—
"Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
"Be sure, even to the end!"—I answered not,
Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued
With comprehension and a steadfast will;
And when he ceased, my brow was sealed his own.
If there took place no special change in me,
How comes it all things wore a different hue
Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence,
Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate?
So that when, quailing at the mighty range
Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
Its bearings and effects alone—at once
What was a speck expands into a star,
Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,

In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

Michal. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!

Festus. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
Were it the trackless air, and not a path
Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Paracelsus. Their light! the sum of all is briefly this:
They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their lore abates?
No; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?

Festus. And yet
As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin. I have heard of such: yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint

Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?

Paracelsus. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?

For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories, as now, when once more seems
The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Festus. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? I will divest all fear.

Michal. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us!

Paracelsus. No, sweet!
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'T is well; but there our intercourse must end:

I never will be served by those I serve.

Festus. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may! 'T is true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us;
'T is but a spot as yet: but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you; put reward aside; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph: still you must retain
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
They should ward off fate's envy—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,

Being so a gift to them as well as me.
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!
Michal. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I! And you?
Do you not feel this? Say that you feel this!
Paracelsus. I feel 't is pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps!
My course allures for its own sake, its sole
Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak:"
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.
Would there were some real sacrifice to make!
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.
Festus. But do not cut yourself from human weal!
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind
For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No—

There are strange punishments for such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God—"I have done all
"For her, not for myself!"

Paracelsus. And who but lately
Was to rejoice in my success like you?
Whom should I love but both of you?

Festus. I know not:
But know this, you, that 't is no will of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
And this the cause—I can no longer seek
To overlook the truth, that there would be
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me!
You are endowed with faculties which bear
Annexed to them as 't were a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will
And gather round them at their need; inspiring
Such with a love themselves can never feel,
Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men can live
On objects you prize lightly, but which make

Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
Or die: and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you; sits well upon
That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
An eating brand, a shame. I dare not judge you.
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
There 's no alternative—I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws
Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
'T is best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

Michal. Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes away,
And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,
Man should be humble; you are very proud:
And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!
—Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
No slow defeat, but a complete success:
You will find all you seek, and perish so!

Paracelsus [*after a pause*]. Are these the barren firstfruits of my quest?
Is love like this the natural lot of all?
How many years of pain might one such hour
O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
To justify your love; and will, dear friends,

In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
See, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this—
If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul: for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error: and to KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,

And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us; where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance—for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
As little knows he what unlocks their fount:
And men have oft grown old among their books
To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed:
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
By age and waste, set free at last by death:
Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate?

Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved; and he goes mad: and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,
But elevate the race at once! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thine angels yet!
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad or lorn of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?

Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from his, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like those who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved. Till then—till then . . .
Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page

Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types!
See, see, they look on me: I triumph now!
But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Festus. I do believe!

Michal. I ever did believe!

Paracelsus. Those words shall never fade from out my brain!
This earnest of the end shall never fade!
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!

Festus. We wait you when you rise!

PART II.

PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Constantinople; the house of a Greek Conjurer.*

1521.

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight! 'T is done at last.
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act! 'T is as yon cloud
Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
The heights already reached, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute

All I have clearly gained; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes:
And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much
Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum: and here amid the scrawled
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results!

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinize the little gained: the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life, and my life! Nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a life

Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
Remembrancer set down concerning "life"?
" 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream,'
" It is the echo of time; and he whose heart
" Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
" Was copied from a human tongue, can never
" Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
" Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
" Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing,
" It seemed, could clearer show; and ever after,
" An altered brow and eye and gait and speech
" Attest that now he knows the adage true
" 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'"

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any: now, let my time be!

Now! I can go no farther; well or ill,
'T is done. I must desist and take my chance.
I cannot keep on the stretch: 't is no back-shrinking—
For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true: "I shall not quit

" His chamber till I know what I desire!"
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments! Rest!
Where has it kept so long? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once!

What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
Been undergone for this? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Slightingly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
End things or mend them,—why, I could not choose

A humbler mood to wait for the event!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task:
The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them; behold,
He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well! What 's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.

Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vow,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,

But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not; yet now, 't is very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love: there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone! gone! the better. I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone

Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts,
I have made life consist of one idea:
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgotten;
All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end: one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence: life, death, light and shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight:
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble

Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe;
I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land:
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too!
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length:
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
I am here, in short: so little have I paused
Throughout! I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am!

Oh, bitter; very bitter!
And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,

Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn! Would I were sure to win
Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
To opal shafts!—only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as ever!
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed?
O God, the despicable heart of us!
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart!

'T was politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump;
At all events, once launched, to hold straight on:
For now 't is all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
Full consummation! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength; and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
"Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth

"To light; this hast thou done: be glad! Now, seek
"The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!"

And yet 't is much, surely 't is very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recompense!
Was she who glided through my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
God! was I fighting sleep off for death's sake?

God! Thou art mind! Unto the master-mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
All else I will endure; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me; 't is thy will, thy righteous will;
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die;
And if no trace of my career remain
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind

In these bright chambers level with the air.
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
Hold me before the frequence of thy seraphs
And say—"I crushed him, lest he should disturb
"My law. Men must not know their strength: behold
"Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour,
To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide
This puny hand and let the work so wrought
Be styled my work,—hear me! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul:
It were no marvel then—but I have reached
Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one!
That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and completing them, possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now? I 'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reached me: a fire-labarum was not deemed
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 't is plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
But who clothes summer, who is life itself?
God, that created all things, can renew!
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected? let me know that first!
No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

[*A voice from within.*]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a care it stirred
If the voice were real or no:

I heard it in my youth when first
The waters of my life outburst:
But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—
As if all poets, God ever meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
As if these leaned in airy ring
To take me; this the song they sing.

"Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home.
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee,
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
So sank we in those old years,
We who bid thee, come! thou last
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
And altogether we, thy peers,
Will pardon crave for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch but work no more,

Who gaze on life but live no more.
Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
The message which our lips, too weak,
Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!
Yet we chose thee a birthplace
Where the richness ran to flowers:
Couldst not sing one song for grace?
Not make one blossom man's and ours?
Must one more recreant to his race
Die with unexerted powers,
And join us, leaving as he found
The world, he was to loosen, bound?
Anguish! ever and for ever;
Still beginning, ending never.
Yet, lost and last one, come!
How couldst understand, alas,
What our pale ghosts strove to say,
As their shades did glance and pass
Before thee night and day?
Thou wast blind as we were dumb:
Once more, therefore, come, O come!
How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
Shall next thy post of life inherit—
How guard him from thy speedy ruin?
Tell us of thy sad undoing

Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
Our weary task, ever renewing
Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
Our powers, and man they could not save!"

APRILE *enters.*

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
Art thou the poet who shall save the world?
Thy hand to mine! Stay, fix thine eyes on mine!
Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!
Paracelsus. Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?
So torture is not wholly unavailing!
Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?
Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
Myself of after-time, my very self
With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
Who robes him in my robe and grasps my crown
For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!
Aprile. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my hair
Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,

The siren's! Yes, 't is like thou hast attained:
Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest?
I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
In after-time; that I should hear the earth
Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Paracelsus. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe!
Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
The harvest sown by sages passed away.
Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
As if, except through me, thou hast searched or striven!
Ay, tell the world! Degrade me after all,
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

Aprile. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy not:
Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will sit
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
To fill thy throne: but none shall ever know!
Sing to me; for already thy wild eyes
Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-shaft
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
After long time: so thou reveal'st my soul.
All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!

Paracelsus. (His secret! I shall get his secret—fool!)

I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!

Paracelsus. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.

Aprile. Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realizing even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure march
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!
Oh ye who armed me at such cost,
How shall I look on all of ye
With your gifts even yet on me?

Paracelsus. (Ah, 't is some moonstruck creature after all!
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den:
They spread contagion, doubtless: yet he seemed

To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that . . . no matter! How he stands
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
Which turns to it as if they were akin:
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of the brow
And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set
In slow despondency's eternal sigh!
Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause?)
I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm!
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Aprile. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king
Regal for his white locks; no youth who stands
Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver,
No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils
Given by a god for love of her—too hard!
Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,

Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
Or blend with others struggling in one form,
Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside some strong
Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
With its own splendour! All this I would do:
And I would say, this done, "His sprites created,
"God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
"Appointed with the various objects needed
"To satisfy its own peculiar want;
"So, I create a world for these my shapes
"Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!"
And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone:
Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,

A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means
Answering to our mind! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle: how rear thereon
My palace? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling; gems are for the East;
Who heeds them? I can pass them. Serpents' scales,
And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins
Must help me; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to: still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
"Had I green jars of malachite, this way
"I'd range them: where those sea-shells glisten above,
"Cressets should hang, by right: this way we set
"The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
"Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
To let my followers know what such things are!
I would adventure nobly for their sakes:

When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or true.
"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,
"Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
"Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
"Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
"Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
"Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
"In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
"But happy plucking them at any price.
"To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
"They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you!
"And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed
them,
"The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
"The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew!"
Thus for my higher loves; and thus even weakness
Would win me honour. But not these alone
Should claim my care; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better

Than he his own heart's language. I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all before:
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
Nay, 't would be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit:
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.

But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire

In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years
Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,
When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And to that end, select some shape once more?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus,

Than he his own heart's language. I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all before:
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Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus,

Aprile! That the truth should reach me thus!
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint!
Aprile. My king! and envious thoughts could outrage thee?
Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last! What care
Through me or thee? I feel thy breath. Why, tears?
Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me?
Paracelsus. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
What penance canst devise for both of us?
Aprile. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness! Even
Thine eyes are hid. 'T is as I knew: I speak,
And now I die. But I have seen thy face!
O poet, think of me, and sing of me!
But to have seen thee and to die so soon!
Paracelsus. Die not, Aprile! We must never part.

Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part?
never!
Till thou the lover, know; and I, the knower,
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear!
We will accept our gains, and use them—now!
God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

Aprile. To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.
Hush! hush!
Ha! go you ever girt about
With phantoms, powers? I have created such,
But these seem real as I.

Paracelsus. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness?

Aprile. Stay; I know,
I know them: who should know them well as I?
White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

Paracelsus. Let him but live, and I have my reward!

Aprile. Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,
Who in his person acts his own creations.
Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!

Paracelsus. Live! for my sake, because of my great
sin,
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
And their deep import. Live! 't is not too late.
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.

Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean thus,
And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word
Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile!

Aprile. No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you!
'T is he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Paracelsus. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile! Let me love!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

PART III.

PARACELSUS.

SCENE.—*Basil; a chamber in the house of* PARACELSUS.

1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Paracelsus. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out!

Festus. True, true!

'T is very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhoped renewal
Of our affections.

Paracelsus. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

Festus. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive:
The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
As best I could the promptings of my spirit
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.

Paracelsus. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

Festus. Just so.

Paracelsus. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days.
Respect all such as sing when all alone!

Festus. Scarcely alone : her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her.

Paracelsus. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :
A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct :
No change, no change ! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood ;
But 't is a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since.
So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me ?

Festus. O very proud will Michal be of you !
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed
Adventure, or devising its reward ;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
For it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount them now

I still predicted your return at last
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Paracelsus. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw restless boy !

Festus. Oh, no : the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon !
Can I forget the anxious voice which said
" Festus, have thoughts like these ere shaped themselves
" In other brains than mine ? have their possessors
" Existed in like circumstance ? were they weak
" As I, or ever constant from the first,
" Despising youth's allurements and rejecting
" As spider-films the shackles I endure ?
" Is there hope for me ?"—and I answered gravely
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .

Paracelsus. Glorious ? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine ! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when thus

To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not?
Festus. Why—why—
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed, very changed! 'T were losing nothing
To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.
Paracelsus. My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:
You will best gain your point, by talking, not
Of me, but of yourself.
Festus. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake. Sigh not! 't is too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Paracelsus. Festus, strange secrets are let out by death
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world :
And I am death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
All traces of God's finger out of him :
Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,
He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
God told him it was June ; and he knew well,
Without such telling, harebells grew in June ;
And all that kings could ever give or take
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies,* eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
Than all fools find to wonder at in me
Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness,
No self-complacency, itching to turn,

* Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.—DORN.

Vary and view its pleasure from all points,
And, in this instance, willing other men
May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
The realness of the very joy it tastes.
What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?
Ofter than you had wasted thought on me
Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
But there 's no taming nor repressing hearts :
God knows I need such !—So, you heard me speak ?

Festus. Speak ? when ?

Paracelsus. When but this morning at my class ?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here ?—that 't is part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basil's benches long unused
To crack beneath such honour ?

Festus. I was there ;
I mingled with the throng : shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen?—too intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes !

What can I learn about your powers? but they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
Your actual value; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway as one!
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Paracelsus. Stop, o' God's name: the thing 's by no means yet
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's labour
—At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—you, beside, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed to be
A notable advantage.

Festus. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!

Paracelsus. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like. No less,
However, I forego that luxury
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strangely
To thinking men; a smile were better far;
So, make me smile! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 't is so long
Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born

Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
And in the earth a stage for altars only.
Never change, Festus: I say, never change!

Festus. My God, if he be wretched after all!

Paracelsus. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
—Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
I have preserved. She told me she believed
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
I then engaged in, I should meet success)
And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

Festus. Thank heaven! but you spoke strangely: could
I venture
To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move
Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own!

Paracelsus. And this for ever!
For ever! gull who may, they will be gulled!
They will not look nor think; 't is nothing new
In them: but surely he is not of them!
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,

Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye
Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
A weaker vision: would remain serene,
Though singular amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute! 'T is vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me
Be fixed much longer; for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern books
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remained unchanged in semblance; nay, his brow
Was hued with triumph: every spirit then
Praising, *his* heart on flame the while:—a tale!
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?

Festus. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
Were raised supreme?

Paracelsus. Good: I do well, most well
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves

With what is past their power to comprehend?
I should not strive now: only, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone:
One who, in youth, found wise enough to choose
The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him
The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
And warned the weak one in such tender words,
Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
That oft their memory comforted that friend
When it by right should have increased despair:
—Having believed, I say, that this one man
Could never lose the light thus from the first
His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
At even my gain if it disturb our old
Relation, if it make me out more wise?
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—

I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable; 't is said at last; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the world!

Festus. You surely do not mean to banter me?

Paracelsus. You know, or—if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 't was my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded
Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days!
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have pursued this plan with all my strength;
And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse

The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend:
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!
Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;
That answers not my purpose; for 't is like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
Here Œcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
And staring,—that the zany of the show,
Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
Expedient in such cases:—the grim smile
That will go round! Is it not therefore best
To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!

Festus. These are foul vapours, Aureole; nought beside!

The effect of watching, study, weariness.

Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
'T is not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.

Paracelsus. I have said it, dearest Festus!
For the manner, 't is ungracious probably;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought best
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still?

Festus. No; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last! 'T is so with all!
First, they set down all progress as a dream;
And next, when he whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few

And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success!

Festus. Few doubtful steps? when death retires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most, swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul?
When . . .

Paracelsus. When and where, the devil, did you get
This notable news?

Festus. Even from the common voice;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Paracelsus. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth

The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; and hereupon
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago
(The prophet!) I should fail—and I have failed.

Festus. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realized as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .

Paracelsus. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matter
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.
And now methinks 't were best to change a theme
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now: this morning's strange encounter—you
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at peace,

To judge by any good their prayers effect.
I knew you would have helped me—why not he,
My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close?
How goes it with Aprile? Ah, they miss
Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,
Our martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:
The poor mad poet is howling by this time!
Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens; they have had their vent,
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Festus. Trifle not:
Answer me, for my sake alone! You smiled
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
Yourself, might blot the else so bright result;
Yet if your motives have continued pure,
Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this,
You have experienced a defeat, why then
I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—

But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.
You sought not fame nor gain nor even love,
No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
Yourself the first. But how is the event ?
You are defeated—and I find you here!

Paracelsus. As though "here" did not signify defeat !
I spoke not of my little labours here,
But of the break-down of my general aims :
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice. A professorship
At Basil! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands,—
Be it far from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice,
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come :

And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
Not easily laid: and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up

Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to life:
To the great reputation of the seer
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics
Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness: last of all were joined
Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—endeavoured
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy;
They authorize some honour; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent;

He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,
And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the dead."
I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there 's no great wonder after all
That, while I fill the class-room and attract
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay,
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer, if I please:
For 't is but right the world should be prepared
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think;
You mind the fables we have read together.

Festus. You do not think I comprehend a word.
The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath;
But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.

Paracelsus. Well, then: you know my hopes;
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain;
That truth is just as far from me as ever;
That I have thrown my life away; that sorrow
On that account is idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what 's marred beyond repairing,

As useless: and all this was taught your friend
By the convincing good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain?

Festus. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were just?
God wills not . . .

Paracelsus. Now, 't is this I most admire—
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it; one would swear
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question charactered
On the heaven's vault. 'T is hardly wise to moot
Such topics: doubts are many and faith is weak.
I know as much of any will of God
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but trained and beaten
Into the path I tread; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
To view the whole thing as a task imposed

Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
Pleasures that once were pains: the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
Or spurned before; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Festus. If I interpret well your words, I own
It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;
Because they are too glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer,
And though too harsh and sudden is the change
To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 't were rosy-strewn.

'T is well: and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

Paracelsus. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive
The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would become a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once;
I calculated on no after-life;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
You will not understand—but 't was a man
With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,
With the same fervour and no more success,
Perishing in my sight; who summoned me
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
That God should interfere in my behalf,
But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
To men. I have not leisure to explain

How, since, a singular series of events
Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account
The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
Some feeble glimmering token that God views
And may approve my penance: therefore here
You find me, doing most good or least harm.
And if folks wonder much and profit little
'T is not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
And the curtain falls: I must hold out till then.

Festus. Till when, dear Aureole?

Paracelsus. Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
And even professors fall: should that arrive,
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
We sin; God's intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy: 't were well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Festus. Be you but firm on that head! long ere then
All I expect will come to pass, I trust:
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared

Meantime, I see small chance of such event:
They praise you here as one whose lore, already
Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
Are faint anticipations of a glory
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Paracelsus. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day,
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
Mere novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
May reckon on their rancour in his turn:
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development. Why swell the list?

Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it: remove all these, remains
A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Festus. 'T is no encouraging picture: still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Paracelsus. God grant it so!
I would make some amends: but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine: much to say, small skill to speak!
These old aims suffered not a looking-off
Though for an instant; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself:
That to possess was one thing—to display
Another. With renown first in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it:
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Festus. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour of so little use.
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once?

Paracelsus. A task, a task!
But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
Docility and what not, 't is yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled; my life still tends
As first it tended; I am broken and trained
To my old habits: they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me
And send me back content to my dull round?
How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes,
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect;

This intricate machine whose most minute
And meanest motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain
And I alone:—how can I change my soul?
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares and quite subdue
Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
Tried patient body? God! how I essayed
To live like that mad poet, for a while,
To love alone; and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed! What should I do,
Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life and die as I began?
I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint;
I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his word

To further my own aim! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
With beauty for itself alone: alas,
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they!

Festus. I think I apprehend
What you would say: if you, in truth, design
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed!

Paracelsus. My friend, my friend,
I toil, you listen; I explain, perhaps
You understand: there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up

My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?
That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places: 't will be worth the while.

Festus. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own words.

Paracelsus. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once: or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be!
You find me here, half stupid and half mad;
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you:
And the event is, you combine, contrast
And ponder on my foolish words as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage!
Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

Festus. Dear friend . . .

Paracelsus. True: I am brutal—'t is a part of it;
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope: and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how
'T is like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm:
We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!
I would forget hints of another fate,
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.

Festus. Another! and what?

Paracelsus. After all, Festus, you say well: I am
A man yet: I need never humble me.
I would have been—something, I know not what;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.

There are worse portions than this one of mine.
You say well!

Festus. Ah!

Paracelsus. And deeper degradation!
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
If vanity should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish
To find its early aspirations true,
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies;
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!
Utter damnation is reserved for hell!
I had immortal feelings; such shall never
Be wholly quenched: no, no!
My friend, you wear
A melancholy face, and certain 't is
There 's little cheer in all this dismal work.
But was it my desire to set abroach
Such memories and forebodings? I foresaw
Where they would drive. 'T were better we discuss
News from Lucerne or Zurich; ask and tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.

Festus. I have thought: trust me, this mood will pass away!

I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest
From your ambition, have been spurned by you;
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them all,
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
Avails to awe save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its selfsame strength disguised,
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!
I know you.

Paracelsus. And I know you, dearest Festus!
And how you love unworthily; and how
All admiration renders blind.

Festus. You hold
That admiration blinds?

Paracelsus. Ay and alas!

Festus. Nought blinds you less than admiration, friend!

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.
I say, such love is never blind; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb?
—To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back
Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
To what it loves, it should at length become
Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits
Even at God's foot, 't will be from such as love,
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;
And least from those who hate, who most essay

By contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which forces entrance even to their hearts:
For thence will our defender tear the veil
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
True admiration blinds not; nor am I
So blind. I call your sin exceptional;
It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!
I speak of men; to common men like me
The weakness you reveal endears you more,
Like the far traces of decay in suns.
I bid you have good cheer!

Paracelsus. *Præclare! Optime!*
Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
Instructing Paracelsus! yet 't is so.
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
'T is in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
Eventually to follow; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine

Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought: nay, they do this;
For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others: I precede my age:
And whoso wills is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his own
May have a prosperous outset. But, alas!
My followers—they are noisy as you heard;
But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Festus. I would supply that art, then, or withhold
New arms until you teach their mystery.

Paracelsus. Content you, 't is my wish; I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek

To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course they are for swaggering forth at once
Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles!
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step!
A proper sight to scare the crows away!

Festus. Pity you choose not then some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-time;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later
You shall be all-revealed.

Paracelsus. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess
Two sorts of knowledge; one,—vast, shadowy,
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:
The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
Prime principles which may conduct to much:
These last I offer to my followers here.

Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:
I must go find them scattered through the world.
Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them
And acting on them: and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well:
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,
Were blocks!

Festus. And that reminds me, I heard something
About your waywardness: you burned their books,
It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Paracelsus. And who said that?

Festus. Some I met yesternight
With Œcolampadius. As you know, the purpose

Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'T was he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Paracelsus. Ah, I forgot: you went . . .

Festus. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittenberg—(you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
Basil and . . .

Paracelsus. I remember. Here 's a case, now,
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention. Pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed!
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under
And heaven above them—points which chance or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come: and next,
Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those

Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther?

Festus. 'T is a wondrous soul!

Paracelsus. True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankind
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
Of our own project—we who long before
Had burst our trammels, but forgot the crowd,
We should have taught, still groaned beneath their load:
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!
Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
What benefits mankind must glad me too;
And men seem made, though not as I believed,
For something better than the times produce.
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom Münzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave and the elector
Will calm in blood! Well, well; 't is not my world!

Festus. Hark!

Paracelsus. 'T is the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees; the embers too are grey:
Morn must be near.

Festus. Best ope the casement: see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops altogether! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.
Paracelsus. Ay; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.
Festus. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again.
Paracelsus. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them?
Festus. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.
Paracelsus. Another world!
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come? Man must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly

As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;
These are its sign and note and character,
And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,
Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more!
See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted, grey and clear without the stars;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves as if
Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
His hold; and from the East, fuller and fuller,
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves
All thick and glistering with diamond dew.
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day,
And we have spent all night in talk like this!
If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.

Festus. One favour,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
Shall pass away, if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on his support, (as I must think
You trusted) is obscured and dim through you:
For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole?

PART IV.

PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Colmar in Alsatia: an Inn.* 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Paracelsus [*to* JOHANNES OPORINUS, *his Secretary*].
Sic itur ad astra! Dear Von Visenburg
Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; and shall as surely start to morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
"Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
"Oppose the plague!" Even so? Do you too share

Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint through these,
Desist for these! They manage matters so
At Basil, 't is like: but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes:
And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp shall stay
To show the next they fawn on, what they are,
This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now despatch,
Despatch, my trusty John; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we 'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow
For Nuremberg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear:

[OPORINUS *goes out.*

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,

How very kind, my first best only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
And I—but let time show! Did you not wonder?
I sent to you because our compact weighed
Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my side:
You come. You thought my message strange?

Festus. So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.

Paracelsus. He said no more,
'T is probable, than the precious folk I leave
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
'T is true! poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last; a most egregious quack he proves:
And those he overreached must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend!

Festus. What is your purpose, Aureole?

Paracelsus. Oh, for purpose,
There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit.

Festus. They really cast you off?
I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother
His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Paracelsus. The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest fable,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence!
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere antics of my art,
Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
I got huge praise: but one can ne'er keep down

Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again; and all for me!
I had a kindness for them, which was right;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them; I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them, "to impart
"The spirit which should instigate the search
"Of truth," just what you bade me! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest. When lo! one man had tarried so long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most;
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
And beaconed properly, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,

Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The colic and what not. *Quid multa?* The end
Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,
Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
And from my heart I wished them better suited
And better served. Good night to Basil, then!
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
The pleasure of a parting kick.

Festus. You smile:
Despise them as they merit!

Paracelsus. If I smile,
'T is with as very contempt as ever turned
Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,

This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
Oh, sages have discovered we are born
For various ends—to love, to know: has ever
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?
If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 't is hate!
Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.

Festus. But your plans, your plans!
I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!

Paracelsus. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil,
And so subside into a monument

Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe, and make that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,
Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance
When they shall condescend to tutor me?
Then, one may feel resentment like a flame
Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood
For a possession, ages: or one may mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.
But I,—now Festus shall divine!—but I
Am merely setting out once more, embracing
My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?

Festus. Your aims? the aims?—to Know? and where is found
The early trust . . .

Paracelsus. Nay, not so fast; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You know they made me
A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know

The when and the how: hardly those means again!
Not but they had their beauty; who should know
Their passing beauty, if not I? Still, dreams
They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty
If that may be. Stay: thus they pass in song!

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
  Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
  From out her hair: such balsam falls
  Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
  Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
  Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
  From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word! And on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,

Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them? So, I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved;
No little proud was I; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Festus. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all! I have travelled far, indeed,
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy;
But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

Paracelsus. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime
I am light-hearted now; what would you have?
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
'T is the very augury of success I want!
Why should I not be joyous now as then?

Festus. Joyous! and how? and what remains for joy?
You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Paracelsus. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool!

Listen: my plan will please you not, 't is like,
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—
I will accept all helps; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have quenched:
I have tried each way singly: now for both!
All helps! no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not baulk me
Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight
That may be snatched; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—"what was gained?"
Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.

Festus. Success!

Paracelsus. And wherefore not? Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred? When I was best, my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest too?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer: I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds; you may conceive
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
I will fight the battle out; a little spent
Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow?
But I can turn even weakness to account:
Of many tricks I know, 't is not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
What should I do with age? So, sickness lends
An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,
And natural health is ignorance.

Festus. I see
But one good symptom in this notable scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in view
To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes
'T is not so: I am glad.

Paracelsus. And if I please
To spit on them, to trample them, what then?
'T is sorry warfare truly, but the fools
Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit
But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
Power to match power, my strength against their strength,
And teach them their own game with their own arms —
Why, be it so and let them take their chance!
I am above them like a god, there 's no
Hiding the fact: what idle scruples, then,
Were those that ever bade me soften it,
Communicate it gently to the world,
Instead of proving my supremacy,
Taking my natural station o'er their head,
Then owning all the glory was a man's!
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short, learning, hard!
And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up

For somebody, but soon was taught his place;
Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
Good Pütter!

Festus. He who sneers thus, is a god!

Paracelsus. Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very glad
You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you
Can see the root of the matter!—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and breadth;
How the mean motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe:
You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus!
Laugh—you shall laugh at me!

Festus. The past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that? For you,

Whate'er you say, there is no degradation;
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,
Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls; not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm, though all night long the famished troop
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Paracelsus. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!

Festus. Nay, further; the delights you fain would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you. . . .

Paracelsus. Hush! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse:
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
Bitter contempt which urges us at first

To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned:
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;
Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly; this will better explain—feel here!
Quick beating, is it not?—a fire of the heart
To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,

And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores,
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!
I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his own.
See! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
Why do you start? I say, she listening here,

(For yonder—Würzburg through the orchard-bough!)
Motions as though such ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
Ha, ha!

Festus. It seems, then, you expect to reap
No unreal joy from this your present course,
But rather . . .

Paracelsus. Death! To die! I owe that much
To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
My time.

Festus. And you have never mused and said,
"I had a noble purpose, and the strength
"To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
"And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil
"To objects little worthy of the gift.
"Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?
"Why seek for consolation in defeat,
"In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
"From ugliness? why seek to make the most
"Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
"With mighty effort to redeem the past

"And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
"To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
"At their fit destination and my own?"
You have never pondered thus?

Paracelsus. Have I, you ask
Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable?
You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.
Just as we cry, "No human voice before
"Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
—Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:
What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
Some characters remain, too! While we read,
The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree

Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
Lay stretched along, each weary crew

In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check
"The shout, restrain the eager eye!"
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach

To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!
"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping·
"Our temple-gates are opened wide,
"Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
"For these majestic forms"—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—"Depart!
"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
"Our work is done; we have no heart
"To mar our work,"—we cried.

Festus. In truth?

Paracelsus. Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint
On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled
In order once: then follows—mark what follows!
"The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
"To their first fault, and withered in their pride."

Festus. Come back then, Aureole; as you fear God, come!

This is foul sin; come back! Renounce the past,
Forswear the future; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole!

Paracelsus. No way, no way! it would not turn to good.
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
'T is well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envying such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
The fitting course for such: dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm:
No mossy pillow blue with violets!

Festus. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!
Say but the word!

Paracelsus. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you; 't is their nature. Thrust yourself

Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not—then try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat!
No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

Festus. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you . . .

Paracelsus. To trust: you know the fruits!

Festus. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in his service—yield you
A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!

In short, God's service is established here
As he determines fit, and not your way,
And this you cannot brook. Such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once!
Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should say—
"We rush to the ocean; what have we to do
"With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
"Sleeping in lazy pools?" Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least!

Paracelsus. 'T is like enough.
The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces: lo, the master bids,—
They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him
And done him service past my narrow bond,
And thus I get rewarded for my pains!
Beside, 't is vain to talk of forwarding
God's glory otherwise; this is alone
The sphere of its increase, as far as men
Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere?

We are his glory; and if we be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved?
Festus. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed you much,
And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without reward?
For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return!
Paracelsus. And quickly. John the thief
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night . . .
Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
No flattery! One like you needs not be told
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.

Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
Wrapt the sound flesh?—so, see you flatter not!
Even God flatters: but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate and wrong
From puny foes; my one friend's scorn shall brand me:
No fear of sinking deeper!

Festus. No, dear Aureole!
No, no; I came to counsel faithfully.
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty
Majestic spirit!—even I can see
You own some higher law than ours which call
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me; and I blame you where they bid,
Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul: the more, that sorrow
Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow

In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate is most inexplicable to me?
And should you perish without recompense
And satisfaction yet—too hastily
I have relied on love: you may have sinned,
But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
As I would have God deal with fragile men
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet!

Paracelsus. Have you felt sorrow, Festus?—'t is because
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!
Well thought on: never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved:—so, grieve her not!

Festus. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Paracelsus. Michal is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!

Festus. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!
Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
I cannot bear those eyes.

Paracelsus. Nay, really dead?

Festus. 'T is scarce a month.

Paracelsus. Stone dead!—then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.

Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Festus. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Festus. But not on this account alone? you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Paracelsus. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

PART V.

PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Festus. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!

And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change! 'T is much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 't is much: but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to live, to lose no faculty;
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell:
When straight his features fell, an hour made white
The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,
Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.
Ay, here!
Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—

Her best achievement, her sublime amends
For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human, but not his; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side—
How could he stop at every step to set

Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away!
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
But what am I? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as well!

Ah! he wakens! Aureole, I am here! 't is Festus!
I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me!
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!
Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?
Misery that he should fix me with his eye,

Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent!—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past!—His eye
Brighter than ever! It must recognize me!

I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more!
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.
Better be mute and see what God shall send.

Paracelsus. Stay, stay with me!

Festus. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!

Paracelsus. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly

The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!

Festus. Festus, your Festus!

Paracelsus. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!

Festus. My hand, see!

Paracelsus. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
'T is an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!

Festus. And what are these to you?

Paracelsus. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well! most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes!

Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
Who will believe 't was you that held me back?
Listen: there's shame and hissing and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.

Festus. Dear friend, who are accursed? who has done . . .

Paracelsus. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or you,

Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage peers?
Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe! why, fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each prince?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:

Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?

Festus. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Paracelsus. Oh, emptiness of fame!
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
But stand no longer? What a warm light life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

Festus. A light
Will struggle through these thronging words at last.
As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.

These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate.
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!

Paracelsus. Cruel! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades;
And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even now
I am not too secure against foul play;
The shadows deepen and the walls contract:
No doubt some treachery is going on.
'T is very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
Have they left us in the lurch? This murky loathsome
Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall
In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
There is a hand groping amid the blackness
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once
They pull you!—Hold!
'Tis but a dream—no more!
I have you still; the sun comes out again;

Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,
Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
How could I still remain on earth, should God
Grant me the great approval which I seek?
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause enough;
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
I drank thus unespied; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them.—'T were best consider that!
You reason well, Aprile; but at least
Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!

We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to thee?
I know thy mercy; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
Which fed my youth! Only one hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! God's creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us!—none, none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 't is a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone! Small time remains,
And much to do: I must have fruit, must reap

Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through; while I have laboured
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 't is, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
Of what I say; something may yet be done.

They are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane: the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon,
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared

With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is:
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn! You thought I could support it.
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From Hate like this. Let me but totter back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing:
I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 't is said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I

Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

Festus. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

Paracelsus. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?
As you say, 't is an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it:
'T is like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,
Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

Festus. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear God!

Paracelsus. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all is done since,
And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,

Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:
I give the fight up: let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God.
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He lived
"Too much advanced before his brother men;
"They kept him still in front: 't was for their good
"But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
"That he should tell God he had never ranked

"With men: so, here at least he is a man."

Festus. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear spirit,
Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day? Their theft shall be their bale:
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
The sheet of winding subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august. I recognize thee first;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.

Paracelsus. Festus!

Festus. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever. There are two of us.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus!

Festus. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

Paracelsus. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!

Festus. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.
Sleep 's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch

Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee.

Paracelsus. More, more; say on!

Festus. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Paracelsus. My heart! they loose my heart, those simple words;
Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch:
Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
What were you doing when your voice broke through
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!

Are you alone here?

Festus. All alone: you know me?
This cell?

Paracelsus. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept out, the rats
Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mistake it?

Festus. But wherefore am I here?

Paracelsus. Ah, well remembered!
Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus!
'T is like me: here I trifle while time fleets,
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.
You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message; but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave half out. All is confused
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.
He would not else have brought you here: no doubt
I shall see clearer soon.

Festus. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair?

Paracelsus. I? and for what?

Festus. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

Paracelsus. What is it you would ask me with that earnest
Dear searching face?

Festus. How feel you, Aureole?

Paracelsus. Well:

Well. 'T is a strange thing: I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather;
But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 't is but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance

Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me.

Festus. 'T is of that past life that I burn to hear.

Paracelsus. You wonder it engages me just now?
In truth, I wonder too. What 's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'T is a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still, it is like, some further cause exists

For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me; it will return anon.

Festus. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to whom
He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 't is many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck!)
And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .

Paracelsus. Ha, the purpose: the true purpose: that is it!
How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
I thus! But no more trifling: I see all,
I know all: my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
I will arise.
Festus. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
You cannot leave your couch.
Paracelsus. No help; no help;
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur; now put
The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;
Last, my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.
Festus. I am dumb with wonder.
Paracelsus. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.
Festus. 'T is no delusion which uplifts him thus!
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?
Paracelsus. Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned?
Festus. 'T is God's praise

That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Paracelsus. Have lived!

We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'T is true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!

Festus. But all comes

To the same thing. 'T is fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
They are no use that way: they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Paracelsus. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
More harm than I have worked! This is my case:
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.

Beside I am not all so valueless:
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time.
Festus. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's sake,
What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?
Paracelsus. When but the time I vowed myself to man?
Festus. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!
Paracelsus. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—
I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,

New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul,
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestical!
But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course.
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To stand: the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,

What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he:
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between

The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life: whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power—neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used

At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love: love—not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust:—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth; man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds

Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
—And this to fill us with regard for man.
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels

The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:

But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus;
I never fashioned out a fancied good

Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power; I could not take my eyes from that:
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past: only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring:
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world

At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth: for thee the present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on thee
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven:
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man!
All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentred strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin

Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love;
Love still too straitened in his present means,
And earnest for new power to set love free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned:
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope

In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both:
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt;
'T is for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me:
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp

Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.
You understand me? I have said enough?

Festus. Now die, dear Aureole!

Paracelsus. Festus, let my hand—
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!
Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Festus. And this was Paracelsus!

NOTE.

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the "Biographie Universelle, Paris," 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

"PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln, (1) a little town in the canton of Schwyz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta: consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by

* I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. "Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt: constat imberbem illum, mulierumque osorem fuisse." A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish at Melander's "Jocoseria," etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatulus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—*e.g.* "Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit." (De Medicina Nova.)

his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim, (2) and many German bishops.

"As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismond Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the Magnum Opus.

"Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone. (3) He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Œcolampadius, (4) to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latchets of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. 'You shall follow me,' cried he, 'you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,* and whomso-

* Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et *Anglos* adjunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere,"—that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging "Anglum quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem."

ever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew: all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.' *

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water. (5)

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate, (6) he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist. † Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated

* See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen: "Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter." "And why not?" (he asks, as he well might). "Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.—Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academiæ. Prodite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem." (Frag. Med.)

† "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."

his 'Chronicle' to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; Einsiedeln is the Latinized Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita; Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbipolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his "Epistolæ Familiares," Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise De Occult. Philosoph., which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud Herbipolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus," etc.

(3) "Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed Mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret." (Bitiskius in Præfat.) "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem." (Melch. Adam. in Vit. Germ. Medic.) "Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad

morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfectaque videtur." (Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?" etc. ("Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos." 1573. Def. 4ta. "De peregrinationibus et exilio.")

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Œcolampadius, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melanchthon at Marpurg. Their letters fill a large volume.—"D.D. Johannis Œcolampadii et Huldrichi Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor." Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of Œcolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—"About this time arose out of Luther's school one Œcolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years." (Life of Bishop Fisher, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso ("Elogj d'Huomini Letterati," Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quenstedt (de Patr. Doct.) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est." Delrio, in his Disquisit. Magicar., classes him among those "partim atheos, partim hæreticos" (lib. i. cap. 3). "Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani." (D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb. 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—"Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et

Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hærere." (Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova.) These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his "Theatrum," "longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias pse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret."

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: "Gentis hoc, non viri vitiolum est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ cœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum." (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam τετυφωμένος adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus κοίλωμα hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant." (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

> Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
> Or Paracelsus with his long sword.
>
> 'Volpone, act ii. scene 2.

> Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
> Shut in the pummel of his sword,
> That taught him all the cunning pranks
> Of past and future mountebanks.
>
> 'Hudibras,' part ii. cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum.*" But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—"Degebat Theophrastus

Norimbergæ procitus a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam authoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinæque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium." (Bitiskius.)* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: "Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi pœnitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant." For these "bites" of Oporinus, see Disputat. Erasti, and Andreæ Jocisci "Oratio de Vit. ob. Oporⁱ;" for the "remorse," Mic. Toxita in pref. Testamenti, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, "De Philosª et Philosᵘᵐ sectis," thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, "De Chymia"—"Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus." I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise "De Phlebotomia," and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—"Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vitæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur." (Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma.)

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—"Hermetis etc. Sapientia vindicata," 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work "De Natura Rerum," on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, "though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius." See Holcroft's translation, vol. iii. p. 179 —"The Eyes." While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in Præfat. in Paramyr.) declares "quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." "O fœcunditas ingenii!" adds he, appositely. Many of these, were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) "rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus." The rest were "charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum." "Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt," says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, "Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ. Bas. 1571;" Mic. Toxetis, "Onomastica. Arg. 1574;" Dornei, "Dict. Parac. Franc. 1584;" and "Pi Philos^e Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio. Paris." (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the "*laudanum*" of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, "Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur? ')—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—"Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit," ***honoravit***, or ***ordinavit***—for accounts differ.

STRAFFORD;

A TRAGEDY.

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY.

LONDON : *April* 23, 1837.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.
Earl of HOLLAND.
Lord SAVILE.
Sir HENRY VANE.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD.
JOHN PYM.
JOHN HAMPDEN.
The younger VANE.
DENZIL HOLLIS.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES.
Earl of LOUDON.
MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod.*
BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower.*
A Puritan.
Queen HENRIETTA.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, &c. Two of Strafford's children.

STRAFFORD.

1837

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall.* HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the* younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES *and many of the Presbyterian Party:* LOUDON *and other Scots Commissioners.*

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rudyard. (And he is here !)—

Hollis. For England's sake let every man be still!
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us ! Rudyard ! Henry Vane !
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate !
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still !

Vane. You say so, Hollis ? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should suspend

England's combined endeavour : little need
To name him !

Rudyard. For you are his brother, Hollis !

Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard ! time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rudyard. Do I forget her ?

Hampden. You talk idle hate
Against her foe : is that so strange a thing ?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs ?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :
But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .

Rudyard. Be you as still as David !

Fiennes. Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

Rudyard. Let 's hope for news of them now he returns—
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
—But I 'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven
Then may be cool who can, silent who will—
Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm

Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be,—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught he feared
To venture on before; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
—If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear:—how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too
—Can I be still?

Hampden. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now! The year he left us,
The People in full Parliament could wrest

The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King ;
And now, he 'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause : England is here !

Hampden. And who despairs of England ?

Rudyard. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I 'll say this—
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you 'd say a prayer !
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, " Why shrink ? Am I not by ? "
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, " I know where best
" The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
" Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'T is well said, Vane!

Vane. —Who has not so forgotten Runnymead!—

Voices. 'T is well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!

Vane. —There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service: what if she arise?
No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise?

Voices. The Renegade!
Haman! Ahithophel!

Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well:
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden!

Fiennes. Stay, Vane!

Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane!

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it; you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope 's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench

This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?

Loudon. We know,
All know—'t is nothing new.

Vane. And what 's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our cause
He would see Pym first; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that 's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips; he 'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all:
"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,
"I 'll not leave you."

Hampden. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?

Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.

Hampden. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!

Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hampden. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!

A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM *enters.*

Even Gideon!

Pym. Wentworth 's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they 've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.
Where 's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .

Loudon. Holds firm:
We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Loudon and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!
Pym. The King 's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth 's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hampden. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!
Hollis. The rumour 's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'T is the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there 's talk enough, by this,—
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down
"At the sword's point."
A Puritan. I 'll do your bidding, Pym,

England's and God's—one blow!

Pym. A goodly thing—
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:
Let 's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who 'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not—no, we would not give that up!

Hampden. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers',—taught what matchless man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should be still
That name?

Rudyard and others. We have just said it, Pym! His death
Saves her! We said it—there 's no way beside!
I 'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down!

Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!
England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants—but I 'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!

Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate! Judas! Double-dyed
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King,—
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You 've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as well,)
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand

His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!
You, Vane,—you, Rudyard, have no right to trust
To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
Like water?

Hampden. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?
The People or the King? and that King, Charles!

Hampden. Pym, all here know you: you'll not set your heart
On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . . [*Shouting without.*

Vane There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth 's at Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is?
Hear you?

Pym. And yet if 't is a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after;—that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hampden. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?

Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play?
Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . . [*Shouting.*

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all 's changed: they change the first,
They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there 's no act
Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE *and* WENTWORTH.

Wentworth. And the King?
Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, lean on me!
Sit then!
I 'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.
Wentworth. No;—or, Lucy, just your arm;
I 'll not sit till I 've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?
Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.
Wentworth. Why? or, why now? — They have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me—they!
Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you?
Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there 's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say!
Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp at you.

Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I
He 's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me—what?
That he for once put these aside and say—
"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"

Lady Carlisle. You professed
You would be calm.

Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—
Why does the King distrust me?

Lady Carlisle. He does not
Distrust you.

Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me; you

Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?

Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen: the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he 's one too?
Go on—and he 's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge—
The charge!

Lady Carlisle. Oh, there 's no charge, no precise charge;
Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
Nibble at what you do.

Wentworth. I know! but Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!
—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she 'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I?

Lady Carlisle. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth?

Wentworth. But go on! The party here!

Lady Carlisle. They do not think your Irish government
Of that surpassing value . . .

Wentworth. The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown
May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes

In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that 's left the King!
Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.
Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble? They nibble?—that 's the very word!
Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .
Wentworth. Enough! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought. What 's Pym about?
Lady Carlisle. Pym?
Wentworth. Pym and the People.
Lady Carlisle. Oh, the Faction!
Extinct—of no account: there 'll never be
Another Parliament.
Wentworth. Tell Savile that!
You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King
May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool

Who might be Pym's friend yet.
But there's the King!
Where is he?

Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you arrive.

Wentworth. And why not here to meet me? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

Lady Carlisle. Because,—
He is now . . . I think a Council 's sitting now
About this Scots affair.

Wentworth. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?

Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .

Wentworth. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?
Not the Scots' war?—without consulting me—
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with?—Ah, you too
Against me! well,—the King may take his time.
—Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine
Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.

Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*

Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,

Forsake the People!

I did not forsake
The People: they shall know it, when the King
Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he 'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen 's half English now—
More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so well!
The King! But now, to tell him . . . no—to ask
What 's in me he distrusts:—or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,
And one false step no way to be repaired.
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM *enters.*

Wentworth. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.
Wentworth. The old voice!
I wait the King, sir.
Pym. True—you look so pale!

A Council sits within; when that breaks up
He 'll see you.

Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.

Pym. Oh, thank Laud!
You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
The case is desperate: he 'll not be long
To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion: only that!

Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!
(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'T is kind
To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need: you shall have all
The credit, trust me!

Wentworth. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not.
Farewell, sir: times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,
You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!

Ah Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?

Wentworth. Sir!

Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then—
Was quite myself since then: for first, you see
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking: 't is a trick I keep.

Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat?

Wentworth. Keep your thoughts! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King!

Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.

Wentworth. Like me?

Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden 's no lord, and Savile is a lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I 've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he 'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.

Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you?
Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend—forbear me once!

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!

Wentworth. Leave me!

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?

Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this,

And Hampden this!

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England—you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend!
This is the proudest day!
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
The rough old room will seem itself again!
We 'll both go in together: you 've not seen
Hampden so long: come: and there 's Fiennes: you 'll have
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[*The* KING *enters.* WENTWORTH *lets fall* PYM'S *hand.*

Charles. Arrived, my lord?—This gentleman, we know
Was your old friend.
The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.

[PYM *goes out.*

You have made haste, my lord.

Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .

Charles. To see an old familiar—nay, 't is well;

Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

Wentworth. Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!

Charles. What can you mean?

Wentworth. That you should trust me, sir!
Oh—not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?

Charles. But rise, Wentworth!

Wentworth. What shall convince you? What does Savile do
To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!

Charles. Have I not trusted you?

Wentworth. Say aught but that!
There is my comfort, mark you: all will be
So different when you trust me—as you shall!
It has not been your fault,—I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—
All will go on so well!

Charles. Be sure I do—
I 've heard that I should trust you : as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Wentworth. No,—hear nothing—
Be told nothing about me !—you 're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !
Charles. You love me, Wentworth : rise !
Wentworth. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'T is I
Can save you : only I. Sir, what must be?
Charles. Since Laud 's assured (the minutes are within)
—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Wentworth. That is, he 'll have a war : what 's done is done !
Charles. They have intrigued with France ; that 's clear to Laud.
Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense?
Charles. He 'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.
Wentworth. Most considerate !
He 's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?
The People would be with us.
Charles. Pym should know.
Wentworth. The People for us—were the People for us !
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :

Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,
Then, here.

Charles. In truth?

Wentworth. That saves us! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances—
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction,—Laud
So styles it,—tutors Scotland: all their plans
Suppose no Parliament: in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.

Charles. You would begin
With Ireland?

Wentworth. Take no care for that: that 's sure
To prosper.

Charles. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You 're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!

Wentworth. Say it all o'er again—but once again:
The first was for the music: once again!

Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,
Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?

Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?
Charles. Ireland,
The Parliament,—
Wentworth. I may go when I will?
—Now?
Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?
Wentworth. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I 'd serve you any way.
Charles. You said just now this was the only way.
Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.
Charles. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.
Wentworth. 'T is my soul
That 's well and prospers now.
This Parliament—
We 'll summon it, the English one—I 'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.
Charles. If they prove restive . . .
Wentworth. I shall be with you.
Charles. Ere they assemble?
Wentworth. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King!

[*As* WENTWORTH *goes out, the* QUEEN *enters.*

Charles. That man must love me.

Queen. Is it over then?

Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,

At least we shall not hear eternally

Of service—services: he 's paid at least.

Charles. Not done with: he engages to surpass

All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought

Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles—will he raise supplies enough?

Charles. We 've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,

I have advised . . . we have decided on

The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is that

The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed

As much.

Charles. This is too idle, Henriette!

I should know best. He will strain every nerve,

And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice

How sure he is of a long term of favour!

He 'll see the next, and the next after that;

No end to Parliaments!

Charles. Well, it is done.

He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,

The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!

Charles. But, Henriette . . .

Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?

Charles. But listen, sweet!

Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him!

Charles. I do not, love,—I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we 'll buy
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, dearest!—look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters.

Rudyard. Twelve subsidies!

Vane. Oh Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!

Rudyard. True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'T is he should laugh!

A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fiennes. —A stinging one,
If that 's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!
A stinging one! but, brother, where 's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

Fiennes. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.
Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now, Vane?

Rudyard. Peace, Fiennes!
Fiennes. Ah?—But he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN *enters.*

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:
I 'd look the People in the face again:
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford!
Hampden. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England Henry Vane!
Rudyard. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there 's an army, now:
Still, we 've a Parliament! Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!)—
Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,
'T is spoken, so console yourselves!
Fiennes. The jest!
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

Rudyard. Mark now: we meet at length, complaints pour in
From every county, all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber; we lend
An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you have!"
Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
"Just listen to them, friends; you 'll sanction me
"The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
"Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
"Twelve subsidies!"

Fiennes. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!

Hollis. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that?
How could he speak his mind? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rudyard. Would I were sure we know ourselves!
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe!

Hollis. Do you count Parliaments no gain?

Rudyard. A gain?
While the King's creatures overbalance us?
—There 's going on, beside, among ourselves

A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville 's gone.
I 'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!

Hollis. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rudyard. Will grant them! Hampden, do you hear?
Congratulate with me! the King 's the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax? All 's over, then!
There 's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,
"We, England, are no party to our shame:
"Our day will come!" Congratulate with me!

PYM *enters.*

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
But we 'll not have our Parliaments like those
In Ireland, Pym!

Rudyard. Let him stand forth, your friend!
One doubtful act hides far too many sins;

It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.
Other Voices. Good!
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you.
Rudyard. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
That ship-money 's disposed of long ago
By England: any vote that 's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament!
Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
We 'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it
For England!
Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!
Pym. Much more when next we meet! Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?

Vane. I sat apart, even now under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure? sure?

Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here.
—And I must speak, friends, now!
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King!
Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
Indeed a Parliament!

Vane. Forgive me, Pym!

Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have, indeed
No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me! He 's with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane

This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!
Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES *and* STRAFFORD.

Charles. Strafford!
Strafford. Is it a dream? my papers, here—
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
So happy—(look! the track you pressed my hand
For pointing out)—and in this very room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
That ruins them! How 's this? What may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?
Charles. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away: indeed
You are alone.
Strafford. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,

Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I 'm alone.

Charles. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.

Strafford. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 't were best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I 'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English . . . but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'T was a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .

Charles. Hear me, Strafford!

Strafford. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for
The Irish Parliament? or army, either?
Is this my plan?

Charles. So disrespectful, sir?

Strafford. My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,
Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.
But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!

Charles. My Strafford!

Strafford [*examines papers awhile*]. "Seize the passes of the Tyne!"
But, sir, you see—see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them frightfully.

Charles. Need the Parliament?

Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!
We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!

Charles. I've undone you, Strafford!

Strafford. Nay—
Nay—why despond, sir, 't is not come to that!
I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?

Charles. My friend of friends!

Strafford. We 'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!

Help they us ne'er so little and I 'll make
Sufficient out of it. We 'll speak them fair.
They 're sitting, that 's one great thing; that half gives
Their sanction to us; that 's much: don't despond!
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want: we 'll make shift yet!

Charles. Good Strafford!

Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
They offer, we 'll accept it: any sum—
For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours: that told, there 's half the blow to strike!
What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?

Charles. Alas!

Strafford. My liege?

Charles. Strafford!

Strafford. But answer me!
Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?
Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give?

Charles. You have not heard . . .

Strafford. (What has he done?)—Heard what?

But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!

[*The* KING *continuing silent.*

You have dissolved them!—I 'll not leave this man.

Charles. 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Strafford. Old Vane?

Charles. He told them, just about to vote the half,
That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Strafford. Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane . . .
O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—
That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more,—
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
And find Vane there!

[*Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.*

Northumberland is sick:
Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
My place in Ireland. Here, we 'll try the City:

If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
And seize the bullion! we 've no other choice.
Herbert . . .
And this while I am here! with you!
And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,
And, I once gone, they 'll close around you, sir,
When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
To ruin me—and you along with me!
Do you see that? And you along with me!
—Sir, you 'll not ever listen to these men,
And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—
Say you, "At any time when he returns
"His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You know
My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Charles. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,
And . . .

Strafford. I! I! that was never spoken with
Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!
That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,
That you would say I did advise the war;
And if, through your own weakness, or what 's worse,
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
You will not step between the raging People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
Remember that I said it—that I never
Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me?
You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
Because I could not share the whisperings
With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?
I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,
But heart of stone—of smooth cold frightful stone!
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
I 'll leave them in the dark about it all?
They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, *enter.*

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured with your gracious countenance
What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
So, gentlemen, the King 's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell
Who haste to save the People—that you style
Your People—from the mercies of the Scots

And France their friend?

[*To* CHARLES.] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hampden. The King dissolved us—'t is the King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.

Strafford. —Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [*To* CHARLES.] (Hush . . . you know—
You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!)—he blames.
Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:
I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . ..

[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,* STRAFFORD *conducts* CHARLES *to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to* PYM, *who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*

Hampden. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!

Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this
unworthy place
To our old room again! He 's gone.
[STRAFFORD, *just about to follow the* KING, *looks back.*
Pym. Not gone!
[*To* STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment 's
made anew:
Forget not we shall meet again!
Strafford. So be it!
And if an army follows me?
Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!
Pym. I 'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford: time shows.
Perish
Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you!
[PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc., go out.*
Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!
Lady CARLISLE *enters.*
You here, child?

Lady Carlisle. Hush—
I know it all: hush, Strafford!
Strafford. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 't is morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He 's always very young)—the trumpets sound,
Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him—
You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed.
We 've the fair Lady here; but she apart,—
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All 's one:
Let us go forth!
Lady Carlisle. Go forth?
Strafford. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously—as the book says.
Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to Scotland?
Strafford. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?
Beside, these walls seem falling on me.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?

Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt. You 'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane
Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.
—You do not listen!

Strafford. Oh,—I give that up!
There 's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'T is so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!

Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .

Strafford. I want a little strife, beside; real strife;
This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?

Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
"Do not traduce me to her!"

Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .

Strafford. The King stood there, 't is not so long ago,

—There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
"Of friends!"—My King! I would have . . .
Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?
Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.
Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.
Strafford. And he never will.
He 's not of those who care the more for men
That they 're unfortunate.
Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?
Strafford. You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend!—that drew me here
From Ireland,—"I had but to show myself
"And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile and the rest"—
You, child, to ask me this?
Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)
Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more.
Strafford. Yes, Lucy.
There 's one man here I have to meet.
Lady Carlisle. (The King!

What way to save him from the King?
My soul—
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
Which clothes the King—he shall behold my soul!)
Strafford,—I shall speak best if you 'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
Could you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,
One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!

Strafford. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?

Lady Carlisle. What?

Strafford. —That I
Described to you my love for Charles?

Lady Carlisle. (Ah, no—
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'T is past.
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)

And you are really bound for Scotland then?
I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!

Strafford. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

Lady Carlisle. What need, since there 's your King to take your part?
He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—
Think you he 'll suffer Pym to . . .

Strafford. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!

Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?

Strafford. Scotland——the weary way!

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.
—A rival's, Strafford?

Strafford [*showing the George*]. He hung it there: twine yours around it, child!

Lady Carlisle. No—no—another time—I trifle so!
And there 's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Carlisle. Prosper—if
You 'll think of me sometimes!

Strafford. How think of him

And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak
The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*

Strafford. That voice of hers—
You 'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.
Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!
His path! Where 's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way
Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,
There 's—Pym to face!
Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?
Not in the market-place,
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down
Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some day:
"Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The . . .
Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They 'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?
Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the king——
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.
—To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND *and others of the Court.*

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?
Savile. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?
Sir H. Vane. Kept me?
Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,
If that may be. All 's up with Strafford there:
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!
Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—
Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say
All we set down for him?
Holland. Not a word missed.
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,

As glared at us!

Vane. So many?

Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves;
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that!

Vane. I'd think
On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?

Holland. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?

Holland. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well?

Holland. 'T is a strange thing, now!
I 've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:
What was it all?

Savile. Something about "a matter"—
No,—"work for England."

Holland. "England's great revenge"
He talked of.

Savile. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves?

Holland. However that be,
'T was something with which we had nought to do,
For we were "strangers" and 't was "England's work"—
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.

Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Savile. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments! 'T was you
Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford: he 's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!

Savile. Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did I . . .

A Messenger *enters.*

Messenger. The Queen, my lords—she sends me: follow me

At once; 't is very urgent! she requires
Your counsel: something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.

Savile. We follow, friend!
Now, Vane;—your Parliament will plague us all!

Vane. No Strafford here beside!

Savile. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,
The Queen!

Vane. Come on, then: understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any—but his use!
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

The QUEEN *and* Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Carlisle. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Carlisle. They met for that.

Queen. No, no!
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'T is a jest.

Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider! 'T is the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They 'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where 's Vane?—That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he 's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?

Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent for him.

Queen. Ah—but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.

Lady Carlisle. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.

Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?

Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!

Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once: he must
Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .

Lady Carlisle. —It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm
And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE *enters.*

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?

Lady Carlisle. I do not hear
That the King 's sent for!

Vane. Savile will be able

To tell you more.

HOLLAND *enters.*

Queen. The last news, Holland?

Holland. Pym
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?

Holland. If they content themselves with Strafford!
Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.
Pym has not left out one of them—I would
You heard Pym raging!

Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE *enters.*

Savile. Not to Whitehall—
'T is to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Savile. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily: at York, remember,

In his own county: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.
Queen. Lucy, he will not come!
Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.
Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with him: that 's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him! What 's the result?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help,—
What came of it? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.
Lady Carlisle. A fright?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the* QUEEN.] You will not save him then?
Savile. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him: and 't is clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage: this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. If we dissolve them, who will pay the army?

Protect us from the insolent Scots?

Lady Carlisle. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than he'll have
Against his old friend Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!

Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.

Holland. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD *enters.*

Queen. You here!

Strafford. The King sends for me, madam.

Queen. Sir,
The King . . .
Strafford. An urgent matter that imports the King!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what 's in agitation now,
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!
Lady Carliste. 'T is welcome!
For we are proud of you—happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford! You were staunch
At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have . . . . we said, even now,
Our hope 's in you!
Vane [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. The Queen would speak with you.
Strafford. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?
Savile. An urgent matter?
Strafford. None that touches you,
Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least! (They half divine
My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.
Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,

May not be here, may . . .

Strafford. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen [*who has been conversing with* VANE *and* HOLLAND]. The King will see you, sir!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To* STRAFFORD.] His Majesty
Has much to say with you.

Strafford. Time fleeting, too!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away? And She—
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. He comes to baffle Pym —he thinks the danger
Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
For help will come; we 'll not be wanting then.
Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed
And calm! [*To* STRAFFORD.] To spare your lordship some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. [*To* Lady Carlisle.]
Beware!

[*The* Queen, Vane, Holland, *and* Savile *go out.*

Strafford. She knows it?

Lady Carlisle. Tell me, Strafford!

Strafford. Afterward!

This moment 's the great moment of all time.
She knows my purpose?

Lady Carlisle Thoroughly: just now
She bade me hide it from you.

Strafford. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme?

Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there 's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

Strafford. Known and approved?

Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.

Strafford. And the King—say, the King consents as well?

Lady Carlisle. The King 's not yet informed, but will not dare
To interpose.

Strafford. What need to wait him, then?
He 'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.

You know him, there 's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long!

Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)

Strafford. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over once,
I knew they would be glad: but he 'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.

Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.

Strafford. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more!
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you 'll tell
The King I waited? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford—Strafford,
What daring act is this you hint?

Strafford. No, no!
'T is here, not daring if you knew? all here!
[*Drawing papers from his breast.*
Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?
The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville—
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!
Strafford. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed!—Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
And the Cabal—I crush them!
Lady Carlisle. And you go—
Strafford,—and now you go?—
Strafford. —About no work
In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!
Lady Carlisle. Stay—stay, Strafford!
Strafford. She 'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Carlisle. Pym 's strong, remember!
Strafford. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,

Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis : one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Brian ! Mainwaring !
[*Many of his* Adherents *enter.*
The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war ; my visit 's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
To Ireland : these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond :
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time ! no matter,
We 'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no—you !
You, friend, make haste to York : bear this, at once . . .
Or,—better stay for form's sake, see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors :
I 'll not have one escape, mind me—not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare !

Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare !

Strafford. I proved that long ago ; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens !
Observe who harbours any of the brood

That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.
And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
"Thorough" he 'll cry!—Foolish, to be so glad!
This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.

Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .

Strafford. Well—do I not? I would be well—
I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 't is of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In Strafford.

Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!

Strafford. No farewell!
I 'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
—If She should come to stay me!

Lady Carlisle. Go—'t is nothing—
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!

Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.

I 'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
"My friend of friends!"

[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*

Lady Carlisle. The King—ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I 'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents *of* STRAFFORD, *etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck
Maxwell: Maxwell sought
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these rufflers.

3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that 's Bryan, hush—
The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers.—1. Mark these worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is
"There shall the eagles"—what 's the rest?

3. For eagles
Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!

One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in Geneva?

A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Behold how privileged we be
That serve "King Pym"! There 's Some-one at Whitehall
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

The Presbyterian. Nearer.

A Follower of Strafford. Higher,
We look to see him. [*To his* Companions.] I 'm to have St. John
In charge; was he among the knaves just now

That followed Pym within there?

Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL *enters.*

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell—
Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Maxwell. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The Earl
Is at his work! [*To* M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Speak out! [*To a* Presbyterian.] Friend, I 've a kindness for you! Friend,
I 've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,
Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.

First. And who 's to bear

These demure hypocrites? You 'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come!

[*A* Puritan *enters hastily and without observing* STRAFFORD'S Followers.

The Puritan. How goes on the work?
Has Pym . . .

A Follower of Strafford. The secret 's out at last. Aha,
The carrion 's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
"King Pym has fallen!"

The Puritan. Pym?

A Strafford. Pym!

A Presbyterian. Only Pym?

Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it be true?

Another. Lost! Lost!

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now! The very thing! A word in season!
A golden apple in a silver picture,
To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

Maxwell. Stand back, all!

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I!

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!

He comes! Quick!

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger—he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and* STRAFFORD *issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of* "Void the House!"

Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .
God!
Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—which beats!
Which beats! Some one word—"Traitor," did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Maxwell. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Strafford. What did you say?

Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.

Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!
[*The* Presbyterians *prepare to dispute his passage.*
Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow!
[*To* MAINWARING.] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL *advances to take it.*
Or, no—not that!
Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that—not that! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Strafford. This gentle Maxwell!—Do not touch him, Bryan!
[*To the* Presbyterians.] Whichever cur of you will carry this
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None?
[*Cries from within of* "STRAFFORD!"
Slingsby, I 've loved you at least: make haste!
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!

Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[*To the* Presbyterians.] You!
—Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!
But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[*Louder cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
The King! I troubled him, stood in the way
Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed—having prepared
A Parliament—I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*
I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[*His own* Adherents *disarm him. Renewed cries of*
"STRAFFORD!"
England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you now!
[STRAFFORD *reaches the doors: they open wide.*
HAMPDEN *and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,* PYM *standing apart. As* STRAFFORD *kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

The KING, *the* QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, *in the background.*)

Lady Carlisle. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One word!

Charles. [*To* HOLLIS.] You stand, silent and cold, as though I were
Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hollis. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You 'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That, since you 've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you leave,
Suppose)—

Hollis. I may withdraw, sir?

Lady Carlisle. Hear them out!
T is the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!
Hollis. "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—"We!"
Charles. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!
Hollis. Ah, true—sir, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day;
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.
Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
—That 's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives; the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close curtain
Must hide so much!
Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose.
Hollis. Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?
Charles. I will defend him, sir!—sanction the past
This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!

Lady Carlisle. Nobly!—will he not
Do nobly?

Hollis. Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Charles. Only, to do this now!—"deaf" (in your style)
"To subjects' prayers,"—I must oppose them now!
It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
So palpably their will!

Hollis. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
Which props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous sand!)
Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you 'd save Strafford.

Charles. And they dare
Consummate calmly this great wrong! No hope?
This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?

Hollis. No plague in store for perfidy?—Farewell!
You called me, sir—[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] you, lady, bade
me come
To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!
You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford!

Charles. I?—and how?

Hollis. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
—He 'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself——
Fared he so well, does any fable say?

Charles. What can you mean?

Hollis. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

Charles. Vane?

Hollis. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate?

Charles. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!
Ask Vane himself!

Hollis. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him
Were Strafford's death?

Hollis. Ha? Strafford cannot turn

As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission?—whether you contrived
Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own,—his part,
To counteract the King's kind impulses—
While . . . but you know what he could say! And then
He might produce,—mark, sir!—a certain charge
To set the King's express command aside,
If need were, and be blameless. He might add . . .

Charles. Enough!

Hollis. —Who bade him break the Parliament,
Find some pretence for setting up sword-law!

Queen. Retire!

Charles. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,
I know not: he is rash, a fool—I know
Nothing of Vane!

Hollis. Well—I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .
[*Turning to* Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
The few words I would say, the stones might hear
Sooner than these,—I rather speak to you,
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
Or England shall succumb,—but, who shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,

You loved me once: think on my warning now!

[*Goes out.*

Charles. On you and on your warning both!—Carlisle!
That paper!

Queen. But consider!

Charles. Give it me!
There, signed—will that content you? Do not speak!
You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,
According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before
He rises to defend himself!

Queen. In truth?
That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change
Like this! You, late reluctant . . .

Charles. Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament——(I 'll think of you,
My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'t is mine,
The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle!

Lady Carlisle. Nay, fear not me! but still
That 's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.

Tear down the veil and save him!

Queen. Go, Carlisle!

Lady Carlisle. (I shall see Strafford—speak to him: my heart
Must never beat so, then! And if I tell
The truth? What 's gained by falsehood? There they stand
Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain
To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them!)

Queen. Trust to me! [*To* CARLISLE.] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Carlisle. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet—may it not be something premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose!

Lady Carlisle. Ay, Hollis hints as much.

Charles. Why linger then?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme: I shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look!

Queen. Stay, we 'll precede you!

Lady Carlisle. At your pleasure.

Charles. Say—
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!

I shall be there, remember!

Lady Carlisle. Doubt me not.

Charles. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!

Lady Carlisle. I 'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.

(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be——
'T is the King's scheme!
My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

Many Groups of Spectators *of the Trial.* Officers *of the Court, etc.*

1*st Spectator.* More crowd than ever! Not know Hampden, man?
That 's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.
No, truly, if you look so high you 'll see
Little enough of either!

2nd Spectator. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

3rd Spectator. Ay, ay, we 've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.

4th Spectator. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .
2nd Spectator. What 's that Pym 's saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!
5th Spectator. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?
2nd Spectator. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"
And the Earl turns as it to . . . look! look!
Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no—he rallies, see—goes on,
And Strafford smiles. Strange!
An Officer. Haselrig!
Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?
The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for Pym
To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?
Pym's message is to him.
3rd Spectator. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?
1st Spectator. Never believe it, man! These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

5th Spectator. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak again?

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spectator. Why, the Earl is coming hither!
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look,—
You 'd say he 'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say!

2nd Spectator. Who 's the veiled woman that he talks with?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl! the Earl!

[*Enter* STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, *and other* Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, *etc.* STRAFFORD *converses with* Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. So near the end! Be patient—
Return!

Strafford [*to his* Secretaries]. Here—anywhere—or, 't is freshest here!
To spend one's April here, the blossom-month:
Set it down here! [*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*
So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to do?

What 's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; whatsoe'er
It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!
'T is something, Hollis, I assure you that—
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
"Strafford" if it would take my life!
Lady Carlisle. Be moved!
Glance at the paper!
Strafford. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.
Peace, child! Now, Slingsby
[Messengers *from* LANE *and other of* STRAFFORD'S Counsel *within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*
Strafford [*setting himself to write and dictate*]. I shall beat you, Hollis!
Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,
In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.
[*To a* Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, contains as much
As I can call to mind about the matter.
Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the* Messenger.] And Radcliffe, say,
The only person who could answer Pym,
Is safe in prison, just for that.
Well, well!
It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you.
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look so grieved?
All 's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?
What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,
Trust me, shall not be played a second time,
Not even against Laud, with his grey hair—
Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make amends,
You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach
Pym and his fellows.

Hollis. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago?
Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently?

Strafford. Child, I 'll tell you—
You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—
Why I stood patient! I was fool enough
To see the will of England in Pym's will;

To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait
Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .
[*To a* Messenger *who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no
such question! Law,—
I grapple with their law! I 'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own!
Their law allowed that levy: what 's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?
Lady Carlisle. The King's so weak! Secure this chance!
'T was Vane,
Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .
Strafford. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say
As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There, my defence
Is done!
Stay! why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not surprise!
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me: could I fail?

Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,
Obscure—there 's nothing to forgive in it
'T is so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles.

Hollis. In Charles? Rather believe in Pym!
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!
Say how unfair . . .

Strafford. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me have to think I pressed
your hand!

[STRAFFORD *and his friends go out.*

Enter HAMPDEN *and* VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter* PYM, *the* Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, *the*
Managers *of the Trial*, FIENNES, RUDYARD, *etc.*

Rudyard. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away

The last spar from the drowning man.

Fiennes. He talks
With St. John of it—see, how quietly!
[*To other* Presbyterians.] You 'll join us? Strafford may
deserve the worst:
But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym!
Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—
No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple!
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
That memory from me?
Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
Take you no care for aught that you have done!
Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!
He staggers through the ordeal: let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears!
Hampden. England speaks louder: who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?
Vane. He was your friend.
Pym. I have heard that before.
Fiennes. And England trusts you.
Hampden. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean account—
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!
Fiennes. I never thought it could have come to this.
Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,
This thought before me. I have done such things,
Being the chosen man that should destroy

The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right at last.

Fiennes. Had we made out some weightier charge!

Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we come
To the real charge at all? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
The words, but where 's the power to take revenge
Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—
The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.

Rudyard. But this unexampled course,
This Bill!

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand
Upon his breast, and judge!

Vane. I only see

Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!

Rudyard and others. Forgive him! He would join us, now he finds
What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough! I knew you would relent!

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III.—*Whitehall.*

The KING.

Charles. My loyal servant! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught

That seemed to implicate us!

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.

She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he 'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'T was too precipitate:
Before the army 's fairly on its march,
He 'll be at large: no matter.

Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir:—my mission is to save,
This time.

Charles. To break thus on me! Unannounced!

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Charles. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear
A word upon my own account?

Charles. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,

Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails.

Charles. Yes, yes

We are aware, sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read

This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth
—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Charles. You can hinder, then,

The introduction of this Bill?

Pym. I can.

Charles. He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him: mark you,
Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,

We know you hate him)—no one else could love
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride! And do you know one strange,
One frightful thing? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England! Draw not back!

Charles. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems fair
Till now. Why, in the end, 't is I should sign
The warrant for his death! You have said much
I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours—
Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?

Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white upon my forehead once;
Wentworth—he 's gone now!—has talked on, whole nights,
And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,

How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?

Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!

Pym. Let me speak!
—Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save——you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
—"How long the Many must endure the One,"
Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!
Or——

Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady Carlisle.

Lady Carlisle. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy

Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .
[*Seeing* PYM.] Well met!
No fear for Strafford! All that 's true and brave
On your own side shall help us: we are now
Stronger than ever.
Ha—what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you there?
Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Carlisle. This Bill! Your lip
Whitens—you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so!
Pym. No recreant yet!
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Carlisle. I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;
'T is only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. Tell the King then! Come in with me!
Lady Carlisle. Not so!
He must not hear till it succeeds.
Hollis. Succeed?
No dream was half so vain—you 'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while
He 's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I 'll not see Strafford!
Lady Carlisle. Only, if I succeed, remember——
Charles
Has saved him. He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait. Go in—
You must go in to Charles!

Hollis. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death! the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you?

Lady Carlisle. I may go, you think,
To France with him? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well.
Tell me,——when he is saved!

Hollis. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 't is vain!

Lady Carlisle. Love? no—too late now! Let him love the King!
'T is the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!
We 'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!

Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!

Hollis. Where he is? Calling wildly upon Charles,
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I 'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his* Children. *They sing.*

O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

William. The boat 's in the broad moonlight all this while—

Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all 's quite gone,

Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep.

Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not—you must know
There 's such a thing as . . .

William. You 're too tired to sleep?

Strafford. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland?

Strafford. No!
Too many dreams!—That song 's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map—
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

William. You 've been to Venice, father?

Strafford. I was young, then

William. A city with no King; that 's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.

Strafford. William!

William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I 'll see Venice for myself one day.

Strafford. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
That way you 'll love her best.

William. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her then?

Strafford. Ah,—they say that.

William. Why?

Strafford. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names!

William. Don't mind her, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!
'T is not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?

William. Why, not the King.

Strafford. Well: it has been the fate
Of better; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That Time will do me right?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Strafford. For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.

William. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)

Strafford. Forsook them! What, the common songs will run
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[*The* Children *resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS *and an* Attendant.

Strafford. No,—Hollis? in good time!—Who is he?
Hollis. One
That must be present.
Strafford. Ah—I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They 'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford 's "not so much as Constable
"In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep oneself awake? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?
Hollis. Strafford!

Strafford. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now—
What if when all 's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
As, whether Strafford's name were John or James—
And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!

Hollis. I would speak . . .

Strafford. Then you shall speak,—not now. I want just now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.

Hollis. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!

Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more,—
The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health—children, for aught I know—
My patient pair of traitors! Ah,—but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin?

William. 'T is you look thin,
Father!

Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.

Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Strafford. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?

Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.

Strafford. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.

Hollis. The King—I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!

Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
[*The* Children *retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,

The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I 've heard, as well
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the order?

Hollis. Spare me!

Strafford. Why, he 'd not have me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steepie hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?
Hollis, 't is for my children! 'T was for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What 's in that boy of mine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he 'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,
He too has children!
[*Turning to* HOLLIS's Companion.] Sir, you feel for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it have looked

Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.

Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!

Strafford. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.

Hollis. 'T is a world's wonder: Strafford, you must die!

Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth?
We 'll end this! See this paper, warm—feel—warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to hear!
"Strafford shall take no hurt"—read it, I say!
"In person, honour, nor estate"—

Hollis. The King . . .

Strafford. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I 'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.

Strafford "Put not your trust
"In princes, neither in the sons of men,

"In whom is no salvation!"

Hollis. Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!

Charles. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
It was wrung from me! Only, curse me not!

Hollis [*to* STRAFFORD]. As you hope grace and pardon in your need,
Be merciful to this most wretched man.

[*Voices from within.*

Verso la sera
Di Primavera.

Strafford. You 'll be good to those children, sir? I know
You 'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters: but you are
So utterly deprived of friends! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to him?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear!
You, Hollis—do the best you can for me!
I 've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford 's dead,
And you 've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:
I 've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
No one could hurt them: there 's an infant, too.

These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them.
Nay—pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word—
'T is gone: I bless you at the last. You know
All 's between you and me: what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!

Charles [*at the door*]. Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament!—go to them: I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
Tell them to keep their money if they will:
I 'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat: only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside!

Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now:
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
Please you retire!

Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Balfour. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd

Charles. Come with me, Strafford! You 'll not fear, at least!

Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 't is no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment 's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death! Lead on! ere he awake—best, now!
All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur? They 'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
Now! But tread softly—children are at play
In the next room. Precede! I follow—

Enter Lady CARLISLE, *with many* Attendants.

Lady Carlisle. Me!
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?
[*To the* KING.] Well—as you ordered, they are ranged without,
The convoy . . . [*seeing the* KING'S *state.*]
[*To* STRAFFORD.] You know all, then! Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should save you,—Charles
Alone; 't is a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame! Strafford, you 'll not feel shame
At being saved by me?

Hollis. All true! Oh Strafford,
She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
The world 's to learn its bravest story yet.

Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.

Strafford. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved
As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

Lady Carlisle. Haste!
Advance the torches, Bryan!

Strafford. I will die.
They call me proud: but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am her's now, and I will die. Beside,
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford. I think if you could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!

Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!

Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.

Hollis. For *their* sake!

Strafford. To bequeath a stain?
Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!

Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape—wake, King! Bid
him escape!

Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?
I'll not draw back from the last service.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford. And, after all, what is disgrace to me?
Let us come, child! That it should end this way!
Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not
To end this way.

Lady Carlisle. Lean—lean on me!

Strafford. My King!

Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends!

Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!

Strafford. Not this way!

This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good boat

Is moored below, our friends are there.

Strafford. . The same:

Only with something ominous and dark,

Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!

Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!

I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!

Lady Carlisle. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!

[*As* STRAFFORD *opens the door*, PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back*; PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard

To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made

Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up

Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—

Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,

And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it. I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
With ill effects—for I am weak, a man:
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but one man—David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long,)—
Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart,
Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—my youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,

And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!

Strafford. I have loved England too; we 'll meet then, Pym.
As well die now! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows; but 't is dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I 'd be set right—not now!
Best die. Then if there 's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there 's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there·
Friends fail—if he have any. And he 's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing—
Nothing! But not that awful head—not that!

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . .

Strafford. Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,
What I must see! 't is here—all here! My God,

Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!
What? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—
Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She 's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—
Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak!
. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she 's my child?
You will not say a word—to me—to Him?

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Strafford. No, not for England now, not for Heaven now,—

See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!

There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you well!

Pym. England,—I am thine own! Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end.

Strafford. O God, I shall die first—I shall die first!

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